



Senate Confirms Commissioner 2019 Accomplishments Outlined

By Judith Persichilli, Commissioner, New Jersey Department of Health

It is a great honor and privilege to be nominated by Governor Murphy as Health Commissioner and to serve with a Governor whose agenda matches my concerns, particularly for our most vulnerable residents.

I'm also very proud to be the first person who started her career as a nurse to be nominated as Commissioner.

I love this state. I was born and raised here. I attended St. Francis Nursing School in Trenton and began my career as an ICU nurse at St. Francis many years ago. I then graduated from Rutgers University with a bachelor's in nursing and went on to receive a graduate degree in administration from Rider University.

I have had a long career in leadership and executive positions in hospitals and health systems, and I am happy to be back home again in the Capital City of Trenton.

I know the health care industry well, having worked most recently as Acting CEO of University Hospital in Newark and as president and CEO of Catholic Health East, a multi-institutional health care system from Maine to Miami. I led the merger of Catholic Health East and Trinity Health in 2013, which formed the second largest Catholic healthcare system in the U.S. with revenues of \$13.5 billion.

I am excited to bring this private sector experience to help advance the work of the Department on behalf of the people of this great State. It has been nearly six months since I joined the Department. In those six months we experienced several challenging issues and have had some noteworthy accomplishments.

Eight lives a day are lost to overdoses but due to the work of the Department in conjunction with other State Departments we have developed programs to stem the tide of overdose deaths. Thirty-nine individuals a day received Narcan. In 2019, 10,000 life-saving doses have been administered by our first responders.

The vaping epidemic caused 100 severe lung illnesses and one death. The epidemic required vigilance as the state joined a multi-state investigation of a non-communicable health problem—something we have never seen before.

We developed a youth social media campaign, called incorruptible.us, and launched a website, vafactsnj.com, for parents, coaches, and public health and healthcare professionals with materials on the dangers of e cigarettes and vaping.

Following Gov. Murphy's executive order, the Department led the Electronic Smoking Device Task Force, which in three weeks issued recommendations that have been used as a model for precautions going forward.

We hired our first dental Director in 30 years.

In the past six months, we trained 79 doulas who have assisted in 168 births—small steps in a long journey toward better maternal health.

The medical marijuana program has reached more than 48,600 patients during the Murphy Administration for a total of 65,700 patients now participating. A seventh dispensary recently opened in Paterson.

Continuing our commitment to women's health, Governor Murphy signed legislation providing \$9.5 million women's health services to replace federal Title X funding to ensure that New Jersey's women and families have access to high-quality reproductive health care resources and family planning services.



Judith Persichilli began serving as Acting Commissioner in August 2019 and was confirmed by the State Senate on January 9, 2020. She was sworn in on January 30.

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Top: Commissioner Judith Persichilli testifies before the State Senate Judiciary Committee at her confirmation hearing on January 9, 2020.

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Senate Confirms Commissioner

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We released a Childhood Lead report in November that showed that 85% of toddlers who turned three during State Fiscal Year 2018 received their first lead screening, an increase of 7 percent; while 2.3 percent of children had elevated blood lead levels of 5 or more micrograms per deciliter—all receiving prompt follow-up.

My vision for the Department includes both strategic and tactical priorities.

Our strategic priorities are to improve the health of New Jersey residents, improve health care that is delivered and lower the overall cost of care.

Tactically, we need the right staff in the right place at the right time to carry on our daily public health mission. This includes monitoring and alerting the state to outbreaks from hepatitis to equine encephalitis, responding to emergent public health concerns like the vaping epidemic and maintaining inspections and monitoring of more than 4,000 healthcare facilities. That is the foundational work that we are called to do.

I am extremely impressed with the quality and resiliency of Department staff given the challenges they face every day. Their commitment to public health and public service is extraordinary.

Recently, national statistics identified three leading causes of death: Cancer, heart disease and medical errors. Although there is controversy on the actual mortality statistics in the study, that was conducted by Johns Hopkins, there is no doubt with the proper vigilance and adherence to evidence-based protocols outcomes will improve. Improving the quality of health care and reducing medical errors must go hand in hand. We need to work closely with the hospital industry to decrease some of the most common causes of errors: communication issues; inadequate information flow; organizational transfer of knowledge; education and training and staffing patterns and workflow.

I believe strongly in the concepts of a healthy work environment. Providing a sense of safety, respect, and empowerment where those closest to the work have a voice to share their insights on how to improve care and work processes. Healthy work environments will provide a solid foundation for the quality we aspire.

Our work to address health care quality and improve outcomes also includes improving maternal health; decreasing implicit bias in care; exploring ways to address social determinants of health; ensuring health equity for all, ending the HIV epidemic and working to eliminate hepatitis; and examining options to address care for the most vulnerable populations—the uninsured and the underinsured.

The Department is working with First Lady Tammy Murphy's Nurture NJ initiative to develop a strategic approach to sustainable improvements in maternal and infant mortality and morbidity. This work will be enhanced with \$10 million in federal health funding that the department recently secured.

This summer we released our first maternal health report card. The report card includes data on surgical births, complications and severe maternal morbidity.

The overdose epidemic remains our biggest health challenge.

We are committed to linking all those in need to treatment and services by engaging healthcare providers, harm reduction centers, local health officials and emergency care providers in the fight to save lives.

As part of Gov. Murphy's efforts to combat this crisis, we have invested \$1 million in a new program called Opioid Reduction Options (ORO) to reduce opioid prescribing in hospital emergency departments across the state.

Nearly a dozen health systems have joined to learn best practices and get technical assistance to address alternatives to pain relief in the emergency room.

With partnerships like this, we can get on the other side of the epidemic.

As Governor Murphy said earlier this month, we have not seen a substantial increase in overdose deaths in the past year. Between 2015 and 2018, we've seen a 28 percent decrease in opioid prescribing. And, in the past year, we've also seen a 53 percent increase in the number of standing orders that allow pharmacists to dispense Narcan without a prescription. That is a 64 percent increase in the number of participating pharmacists, and a 30 percent increase in the number of pharmacies.

But we know that far too many remain impacted by Substance Use Disorder and this Administration and the Department is committed to evidence-based, sustainable solutions.

2019 Department of Health Accomplishments

- Distributed 1.6 million doses of vaccine through the Vaccine For Children program
- Enrolled 48,600 patients in Medical Marijuana Program during Murphy Administration
- Nearly 14% decline in state psychiatric hospital census :1,504 in 1/2018 to 1,296 as of 11/2019 by improving patient access to community-based services
- Hired first Dental Director in 30 years, Dr. Darwin Hayes
- Administered 10,000 Narcan doses
- Released 1st Maternal Health Report Card with data on surgical births, complications & severe maternal morbidity
- Launched VapeFactsNJ.com & incorruptible.us to warn youth & parents about vaping
- Served 3,122 in Harm Reduction Centers
- Issued 1,000 standing orders so pharmacists can dispense Narcan w/out script
- Investigated 103 confirmed and probable vaping related illnesses
- Funded training for 11 hospitals in Opioid Reduction Options Program to learn best practices in alternatives to pain relief in ER
- Inspected nearly 1,200 healthcare facilities
- Trained 79 doulas who have assisted in 168 births
- Licensed 7th Medical Marijuana dispensary in Paterson

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Preparedness Activities Underway in New Jersey to Respond to Potential Novel Coronavirus Cases

As more information becomes available about the global novel coronavirus outbreak, New Jersey is preparing to respond to any potential cases. With six confirmed cases in the U.S., the Murphy Administration is taking a comprehensive approach to respond by ensuring public health and health care system preparedness. At this time, New Jersey has no confirmed cases of novel coronavirus or reports under investigation.

“New Jersey is an international crossroads, home to global businesses and research and educational institutions, and with proximity to numerous international airports and other points of entry,” Governor Phil Murphy said. “Together, we are collaborating with our federal partners, state authorities, and local health officials to ensure that we have strong preparedness protocols in place to protect all New Jerseyans.”

On January 30, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) announced the first instance of person-to-person spread of this virus between a confirmed case in Chicago and her husband, with whom she has sustained, prolonged close contact with after her return from China.

Coronaviruses in general are common and a frequent cause of respiratory illnesses such as colds. However, sometimes a new type of coronavirus appears and begins infecting humans, which is what we are seeing now. Although this novel virus is understandably a cause for concern, it is important for New Jersey residents to know that the risk to the general public remains low.

Patients with confirmed novel coronavirus have reported mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of fever, cough and shortness of breath. CDC believes at this time that symptoms of this virus may appear in as few as two days or as long as two weeks after exposure.

As part of the preparedness activities, the Department of Health launched a [webpage](#) with resources, including travel updates and advisories, fact sheets, Frequently Asked Questions and guidance sent to health care providers, local health departments, infection preventionists, schools, universities and other partners. The Department also partnered with the New Jersey Poison Information and Education System – also known as the New Jersey Poison Center – to open a hotline ([1-800-222-1222](tel:1-800-222-1222)) for the public to ask questions. The 24-hour, free hotline is staffed with trained health care professionals and can accommodate callers in multiple languages. In the first 48 hours, the call center received more than 160 calls related to novel coronavirus. The top three concerns were related to those at risk, recent travel to and from China, and school/classroom questions.

“If you haven't traveled and are feeling ill, your symptoms may be related to flu or other respiratory viruses,” Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli said. “We are in the height of respiratory virus season, so individuals should practice good health habits such as washing hands often and staying home when they're sick.”

This week, the Department held a conference call with 250 hospitals and local health officials to keep them updated on the latest information we are receiving from CDC and provided an overview of state Department of Health guidance for evaluating and reporting possible novel coronavirus illness and hospital infection control procedures. This guidance includes taking of a full travel and potential-exposure history, which is a critical metric when determining whether a patient meets specific criteria for CDC testing. Health care facilities should [work with their local health department](#) to report potential cases. Commissioner Persichilli has also sent a letter to hospital CEOs to reinforce this guidance.

Right now, only the CDC laboratories in Atlanta have the capabilities to test for this virus, though it is expected that state public health laboratories will be able to test soon. The Public Health and Environmental Laboratories in West Trenton are ready when a diagnostic test becomes available.

New Jersey continues to work closely with the CDC and local health partners to monitor the situation and will provide updates accordingly.

For more information, visit nj.gov/health/coronavirus.



Governor Murphy, left, and Commissioner Persichilli delivered a public briefing on the global coronavirus outbreak on January 29 in Newark.

2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

A novel (new) coronavirus is causing an outbreak of **respiratory illness** in the city of Wuhan, Hubei Province, China.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses and usually only cause mild respiratory disease, such as the common cold.

Signs and symptoms of this illness include **fever, cough, and difficulty breathing.**

2019-nCoV has the potential to cause **severe disease.**

If you must travel:

- Avoid contact with sick people.
- Avoid animals (alive or dead), animal markets, and products that come from animals (such as uncooked meat).
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Older adults and travelers with underlying health issues may be at risk for more severe disease and should discuss travel to Wuhan with their healthcare provider.

If you traveled to Wuhan in the last 14 days and feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, you should:

- Seek medical care right away. Before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room, **call ahead** and tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms.
- Avoid contact with others.
- Not travel while sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

For more information, visit the [CDC Travel Health Notices](#) and the [NIDOH 2019-nCoV](#) webpages.

Follow the New Jersey Department of Health on [Twitter @njdeptofhealth](#), [Facebook /njdeptofhealth](#) and [Instagram @njdeptofhealth](#).

February is National Children’s Dental Health Month!

The Office of Oral Health at the New Jersey Department of Health is joining with the American Dental Association to observe National Children’s Dental Health Month in February. This month-long national health observance brings together thousands of dedicated dental professionals, health care providers and others to promote the benefits of good oral health to children and adults, caregivers, teachers and many others.

This year’s NCDHM campaign slogan is, “Fluoride in water prevents cavities! Get it from the tap!”

National Children’s Dental Health observances began with a one-day event in Cleveland, Ohio and a one-week event in Akron, Ohio during February 1941.

Since then, the concept has grown from a two-city event into a nationwide program. The American Dental Association held the first national observance of Children’s Dental Health Day on February 8, 1949. The single day observance became a weeklong event in 1955. And in 1981, the program was extended to a month-long celebration known today as National Children’s Dental Health Month.

NCDHM messages reach millions of people in communities across the country and at numerous armed service bases. Local observances often include poster, coloring and essay contests, health fairs, free dental screenings, museum exhibits, classroom presentations and dental office tours.

Attitudes and habits established at an early age are critical in maintaining good oral health throughout life. By participating in the annual celebration of National Children’s Dental Health Month, members of the dental team, parents, teachers and others can help keep children’s smiles beautiful now and for years to come.

Local Leaders in Antimicrobial Stewardship Announced

The first round of winners in the new Antimicrobial Stewardship Recognition Awards were announced at the New Jersey Hospital Association in Princeton, NJ on December 5, 2019. New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) Assistant Commissioner/State Epidemiologist Christina Tan, MD, MPH was on hand to present the awards to the healthcare facilities that stood out among their peers as excelling in their efforts to effectively manage use of antimicrobial drugs, such as antibiotics. An antibiotic is a drug that destroys only bacteria. Antimicrobial is a term used to describe drugs that act against a wide variety of microbes such as bacteria, fungi, viruses, and protozoa.

“Antibiotic-resistant bacteria and fungi cause more than 2.8 million infections and 35,000 deaths in the United States each year according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. These powerful medicines combat life-threatening diseases, but overuse leads to an immunity against these drugs and poses significant public health threats,” said Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli.

Gold: Acute Care	<p>CarePoint Health Bayonne Medical Center Chilton Medical Center, Atlantic Health System Cooper University Hospital Hackensack University Medical Center Inspira Medical Center Elmer Inspira Medical Center Mullica Hill Inspira Medical Center Vineland Jefferson Cherry Hill Hospital Jefferson Stratford Hospital Jefferson Washington Township Hospital Monmouth Medical Center Morristown Medical Center, Atlantic Health System Ocean Medical Center Overlook Medical Center, Atlantic Health System Saint Mary's General Hospital Saint Peter's University Hospital Southern Ocean Medical Center, Hackensack Meridian Health St. Joseph's University Medical Center St. Joseph's Wayne Medical Center Virtua Health - Marlton Virtua Health - Memorial Virtua Health - Voorhees</p>
Gold: Post Acute Care	<p>Bergen New Bridge Medical Center, Long Term Care Division</p>

Modeled on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Core Elements of Antibiotic Stewardship, the NJDOH’s Communicable Disease Service (CDS) Antimicrobial Stewardship Recognition Program (ASRP) offered healthcare facilities an opportunity to submit and share their current efforts. Facilities were awarded with a gold, silver, or bronze recognition level based upon whether they perform tasks that tackle the seven core elements: Leadership Commitment, Accountability, Action, Drug Expertise, Reporting, Tracking, and Education.

In addition to recognizing the achievements of awardees, the program is also intended to encourage facilities to enhance existing programs and influence facilities without robust stewardship programs to develop them. The CDS ASRP ultimately seeks to better preserve the power of antimicrobial drugs and prevent the spread of antimicrobial-resistant germs.

Join us in congratulating all of the winners of the 2019 Antimicrobial Stewardship Recognition Awards!

Gloucester County's First New Hospital in Decades Opens in Mullica Hill



Kathy Scullin, Vice President, Marketing and Public Relations, Inspira Health

From idea phase to construction, the goal has remained the same—create an environment where innovation and technology will allow Inspira's physicians and care teams to provide outstanding care in the safest and most efficient manner possible. Approximately 1,400 Inspira Health employees are now making this goal a reality. Inspira Medical Center Mullica Hill opened at 7 a.m. on December 15, becoming Gloucester County's first new hospital in nearly 45 years. The former hospital in Woodbury has transitioned to an outpatient center with a satellite ER; lab, imaging and other outpatient services; and behavioral health care.

"With this new hospital, our commitment to providing exceptional care for our community, in our community reaches a new level," explains John DiAngelo, president and CEO of Inspira

Health. "Our physicians and care teams are focused on clinical excellence and patient safety as they begin caring for patients in this state-of-the-art medical center."

The 465,000 square foot hospital is located on 100 acres adjacent to Rowan University's West Campus. A connected leading-edge cancer center will open in early 2020. The new hospital features a 62-bed emergency department, including dedicated pediatric and senior ERs; two cardiac cath labs, one with biplane technology; two robot-assisted surgery systems; and a hybrid OR for advanced vascular procedures.

Cerner Smart Room technology is found throughout the hospital, including in all 210 private rooms. This suite of technology automates a number of functions and enhances patient safety. It places patient vital signs directly into the EMR; creates virtual bed rails, adding an extra layer protection for patients who are at high risk of falls; provides real-time identification of staff members who enter a patient room; and gives patients easy access to the internet, patient education and entertainment programming. A smartphone-like device carried by clinical staff simplifies communication between caregivers and provides patients with a direct link to their nurse.

A combined heat and power plant, 3-acre solar field and energy efficient lighting and equipment make the hospital 25 percent more efficient than typical hospitals of this size. Sustainability measures also include the planting of 836 mostly-native trees, and low maintenance meadow grasses and wildflowers that require less watering, mowing and fertilizing.

Finding a suitable location for the hospital was a critical first step. After considering several options, an agreement was reached to purchase land from Rowan University. This location provides easy access from Rt. 55 and will further strengthen the relationship between the two institutions in the areas of education, research and innovation.

As with all projects of this size, a number of challenges had to be overcome. An unusually wet and cold weather pattern during the early months of construction required a concerted, and successful, catch-up period once the weather improved. Inspira also worked with local officials to mitigate traffic concerns. Finalizing plans for the Woodbury campus continue with several scenarios being explored by developers. Finding the best use for segments of the campus is a priority for Inspira.

Inspira's leadership team appreciates the New Jersey Department of Health's commitment to helping it better meet the needs of the communities it serves. Inspira Health operates three hospitals and offers more than 150 service locations in five South Jersey counties.



Governor Murphy Highlights Health in State of the State Message

Hospitals

“We have some of the nation’s, if not the world’s, leading hospitals and health care facilities. We are home to groundbreaking research and treatments. We need to ensure that these are accessible to everyone.”

Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency

We’ve implemented smart policies, like the historic reforms Speaker Coughlin and Senator Joe Vitale sponsored to protect consumers from surprise out-of-network bills.

But we can do more.

So, I am establishing an Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency, in the Governor’s Office, to work across state agencies and lead critical efforts to reduce consumer health care costs, make insurance more affordable, and improve price transparency.

Opioids

“The preliminary numbers suggest New Jersey saw a three-percent decrease in the number of individuals lost to opioids last year, after three years of double-digit increases.”

Black Maternal/Infant Mortality

“We will continue the strong partnerships the First Lady has created across the state – government officials and legislators, health care practitioners, faith leaders, and community activists – to combat our Black infant and maternal mortality crisis. We will not stop until New Jersey is the safest state in the nation to give birth.”

Women’s Health

“We’ve protected funding for Planned Parenthood and women’s health care. We ended the prior administration’s eight-year-long effort to starve these critical facilities.

But this must go beyond just providing funding to make up for the loss of Title X money. It’s about protecting a woman’s fundamental and constitutional right to full reproductive freedom.”

Lead

“When I proposed my plan for taking on our lead crisis, in all the ways it manifests itself, I did not shy from acknowledging that it will require significant investment. This is an acknowledgement shared in this chamber, as well.

We will need funds to replace old lead lines and remediate lead paint in homes. We will need to mobilize a veritable army of union workers – plumbers and pipefitters, remediation experts, carpenters and laborers, among so many other tradespeople.”



Governor Murphy delivered the State of the State address at the State House in Trenton on January 14, 2020.

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Hospitals and Long-Term Care Facilities

Oversight of our hospitals is another important priority. We monitor the finances of all hospitals on a monthly and quarterly basis. We need to ensure that our hospitals are stable and sustainable while pursuing other innovative models of care to address the specific needs of communities.

Nursing Homes and long-term residential facilities are also a primary focus. We need to provide the utmost vigilance of these facilities which includes timely follow up of all expressed complaints and concerns.

Psychiatric Hospitals

Oversight of our hospitals of course includes our four psychiatric hospitals. The safety of patients and staff is our highest priority.

In my first month at the Department I visited the four psychiatric hospitals and held town hall meetings with staff to discuss the challenges of caring for this vulnerable population.

I continue to work aggressively with leadership to ensure that we provide the highest quality therapeutic and safe environment for these individuals.

Closing

A hospital futurist, Dr. Leland Kaiser, instilled in me that the only difference between scarcity and abundance is creativity. Building on the intellectual capital within and outside the Department to move toward a more effective and efficient operation is one of my primary goals. I have found the team of leaders at the Department ready and prepared to develop creative responses to current challenges.

I look forward to working with all of you as we address the health care and public health challenges that lay ahead.

Many have asked me why I chose to consider this position at this time. I can only share what I told the Governor when we discussed this appointment: I want to do the best that I can, for the most that I can, for as long as I can.

Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Appropriating \$9.5 Million for Family Planning Services

Legislation Replaces Federal Funding for Family Planning Providers Impacted by Title X Gag Rule

Governor Phil Murphy has signed legislation that makes a Fiscal Year 2020 appropriation of \$9.5 million to the New Jersey Department of Health for family planning services. The legislation will replace critical federal funding for family planning services that are impacted by the Trump Administration's implementation of the Title X gag rule, which limits access to health care and family planning resources.

"The federal government has once again put narrow political interests before the best interests of the American people by implementing the Title X gag rule, which blocks women from access to vital information and resources that are critical to their health," said Governor Murphy. "Family planning providers like Planned Parenthood made a conscious decision to continue providing health care information and resources at the expense of much-needed federal funding. New Jersey is stepping up to replace federal Title X funding for family planning providers to ensure that New Jersey's women and families have access to high-quality reproductive health care resources and family planning services."

"The federal government's Title X gag rule jeopardizes access to critical health care services such as cancer screenings, sexually transmitted disease testing, affordable birth control, and more for approximately four million patients served across the country," said First Lady Tammy Murphy. "Ensuring access to comprehensive family planning services is critical and this necessary legislation will lead to better health outcomes for New Jersey's women and children."

"I am grateful to the Governor and the Legislature for protecting access to reproductive health care for tens of thousands of New Jerseyans," said Commissioner Judith M. Persichilli. "With the signing of this legislation, Governor Murphy is ensuring that New Jersey's family planning providers will not be forced to choose between receiving funding to keep their doors open or delivering care in a comprehensive, patient-centered manner based on national best practices."

In February 2018, Governor Murphy signed his first piece of legislation which restored \$7.45 million in funding to Planned Parenthood and other women's health facilities that had been cut during the Christie administration. Governor Murphy also signed legislation (S105/A1656) providing Medicaid coverage for family planning services to low-income individuals. With the signing of this legislation, the New Jersey Department of Human Services created a new family planning benefit program for women and men with incomes that are higher than traditional Medicaid eligibility. The benefit, called Plan First, launched in October 2019, and provides coverage for birth control, the HPV vaccine, family planning-related lab testing, and other targeted family planning-related health care needs.



Department of Health Releases 2018 Childhood Lead Report

Continues Efforts to Prevent, Screen and Intervene

Nearly 85 percent of toddlers who turned 3 during SFY2018 received at least one blood lead test in their lifetime—an increase of 7 percent over the previous year—and more than 191,000 children under 17 were screened for lead last year, according to the [SFY2018 Childhood Lead Annual Report](#) released by the Department of Health.

About 4,400 children—or 2.3 percent of all children under age 17—had elevated blood lead levels in SFY2018 when the state lowered the standard of an elevated blood lead test from 10 ug/dL to 5 ug/dL. As a result of lowering the standard, 3,500 children (of the 4,400) were newly identified as having elevated blood lead levels because of the new standard which now includes those between 5 and 9 ug/dL. The lower threshold allows local health agencies to intervene earlier with home inspections and nurse case managers. [Learn more](#)

DOH Hosts National Conference on EMS

The Department of Health hosted the National Conference on EMS in November in Atlantic City. This exciting, state-of-the-art conference provided Emergency Medical Services clinicians with educational opportunities that reflect current medical knowledge and practice. The conference gave clinicians tools to enhance patient care, based on current evidenced based practice, and reinforced procedures critical for smooth and efficient on-scene operations.

The preconference highlights included a human cadaver lab, an active shooter simulation, and a simulation of a patient trauma experience, following a patient from the prehospital environment to the ICU of a hospital following a critical injury.

The main conference had more than 100 sessions presented by subject matter experts from around the country. Sessions were divided into tracks: EMS administrator, EMS educator, Basic and Advanced Life Support Providers, Physicians, Nurses and Public Health Professionals. Sessions included specific areas of interest in pediatrics, emergency preparedness, safety/wellness and quality improvement. CME credits were awarded to EMTs, Paramedics, Nurses, Physicians and Public Health Professionals.

The conference also sponsored a National SIM competition in which teams from Ohio, New York and New Jersey competed to determine who was able to best manage critically ill or injured patients during a simulation.

The Department's Office of Emergency Medical Services presented the "Five Minutes to Help" program to educate all first responders on proper communication with patients following treatment from a suspected opioid overdose; providing patients with recovery resources that are available locally, regionally, and statewide; and reducing the number of repeat overdose patients. Additionally, Department staff distributed more than 500 EMS Opioid Recovery Resource bags, which includes information about where to get recovery referrals, flashlights and magnets. The conference culminated with the annual EMS Awards Program on Friday evening. The Department certifies more than 26,800 EMTs and they respond to more than 1 million calls each year.



Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Imposing Permanent Ban on Flavored Vape Products



Governor Phil Murphy signed legislation to make New Jersey the first state in the nation to impose a permanent ban on flavored vape products. The legislation (S3265) prohibits the sale and distribution of flavored vape products, including menthol. The Legislature passed the bill based on a recommendation from Governor Murphy's Electric Smoking Device Task Force, which was created by Executive Order No. 84 and directed to formulate a comprehensive strategy to protect New Jerseyans from the hazards of electronic cigarettes.

"As Governor, I am first and foremost charged with protecting the health and safety of our people," said Governor Murphy. "Research shows that flavored electronic smoking devices and products, such as mint, candy, fruit, and chocolate, are extremely appealing, especially to children. I commend my partners in the Legislature for reacting swiftly to the Task Force's recommendations to pass legislation that will protect both youth and adults from the hazards of flavored electronic smoking device use."

Primary sponsors of the legislation include Senators Shirley Turney, Richard Codey, and Joseph Vitale and Assembly members Herb Conaway, Jr., Carol Murphy, and Valerie Vainieri Huttle.

"The rapid increase in vaping's popularity among middle and high schoolers is deeply troubling, especially given their lack of understanding as to what it is they are putting into their bodies," said Senator Turney. "By banning flavored vaping products, this law will help to discourage our youth from taking up this dangerous habit and reduce its prevalence in our homes and schools."

"There is no doubt that the tobacco industry have used flavored vaping products as a means of enticing young people to use their products, making them prone to addiction and a lifetime of serious health risks," said Senator Codey. "The flavors are a marketing ploy to get them hooked at a young age, when they are more susceptible and more vulnerable, physically and socially. We have been successful in bringing down smoking rates for cigarettes, but it took a concerted effort. We now have to do the same for flavored vaping products because the risk to young people is more immediate and just as severe."

"Our state cannot and will not ignore the widespread use of these harmful nicotine products among adolescents," said Assemblyman Conaway. "Flavored products are designed to attract young people, which is one of the reasons why most traditional cigarette flavors were banned a decade ago. Getting flavored vaping products off the market will protect our youth. If we don't, we will have another generation of young people addicted to nicotine when we were so close to reducing widespread dependency on this chemical."

"The nicotine in e-cigarettes is just as harmful as that of traditional cigarettes, yet many people may not realize just how detrimental nicotine really is for anyone under the age of 25," said Assemblywoman Murphy. "Nicotine can expose developing brains to negative effects such as addiction, mood disorders and lower impulse control. Many teens are even worried about the damage vaping can do to their health but are too addicted to stop. It's our responsibility to help them by doing everything in our power to limit the appeal of – and access to – these products going forward."

"Study after study has shown that flavors such as cotton candy and mango not only draw teens in, but keep them coming back when it comes to electronic cigarettes," said Assemblywoman Vainieri Huttle. "Mint is especially popular since the menthol helps ease new users into vaping by cooling their throat and reducing any harshness they would normally feel when inhaling the nicotine. We know what needs to be done to help keep kids safe and that's what we're doing with this law."

New Jersey Department of Health Continues Efforts to Combat Overdose Epidemic

The Department of Health continues to implement initiatives to help reverse the tide of the opioid epidemic in the state.

"Eight lives are lost each day to the overdose epidemic in New Jersey," said Health Commissioner Judith M. Persichilli. "We are committed to linking all those in need to treatment and services by engaging healthcare providers, harm reduction centers, local health officials and emergency care providers in the fight to save lives."

The Department of Health is expanding its "5 Minutes to Help" training course for Emergency Medical Services staff to improve connections to care for non-fatal overdose victims. This program has already trained 75 first responders so they can effectively provide patients with information on recovery resources. Last week, the Department launched an online introduction course for EMS and law enforcement partners and will hold several in person trainings this year. First responders are on the front lines of this public health challenge, saving lives and serving as the first link to treatment and services. In 2019, EMS administered nearly 10,000 doses of naloxone. The Department is also increasing access to naloxone. The Department's Naloxone Standing Orders program allow pharmacists to dispense the opioid anti-dote without a prescription. In 2019, there was a 63 percent increase in participating pharmacists and a 30 percent increase in pharmacies.

To reduce dependence on opioids, the Department is working with hospital care providers to decrease opioid prescribing to treat chronic pain in emergency departments. Through the Opioid Reduction Option (ORO) program, 11 hospitals have enrolled in training. St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center, which serves as a Gold Technical Partner, is sharing its best practices that have received national recognition in reducing opioid prescriptions in their emergency department. In 2019, 165 emergency department personnel were trained. This year, the Department, and its partner, the New Jersey Hospital Association, will hold another round of training to engage more hospitals in this effort. The goal of the ORO program is to ultimately reduce overall opioid prescribing in NJ's emergency departments to 12 percent or less. [Learn more](#)

New Jersey Department of Health

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Comings and Goings

Nancy Kelly Goodstein, who began her career with the Department of Health in 1985 and most recently held the post of Ethics Liaison Officer, retired in December 2019 after 34 years of service. Nancy served in a leadership role in the Department's Office of Emergency Medical Services from 2008 to 2017. She continues to teach New Jersey's future Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) as an Adjunct Professor at Kean University.



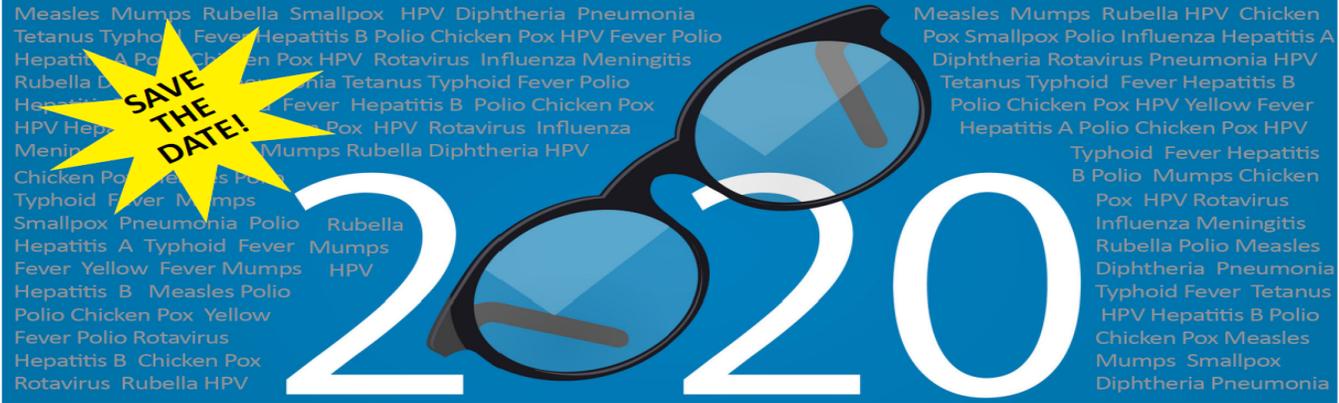
Lubna Qazi-Chowdhry, who joined the Department as a Special Assistant to the Commissioner in 2019, has succeeded Nancy Kelly Goodstein as Ethics Liaison Officer. Prior to joining the Department, Lubna spent more than 10 years in private law practice following a clerkship with the Honorable Charles Middleworth, Jr. in the Chancery Division of the New Jersey Superior Court. She is a graduate of the University of California, Irvine, and attended law school at Western State University.

Jamie Weller has joined the Department's Office of Local Public Health as a Public Health Nurse Consultant. She began her nursing career as a critical care nurse in the Cardiac Intensive Care Unit at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, where she developed an interest in public health. Her educational background includes a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and a minor in Health Care Systems from the University of Pennsylvania, and a Master of Science in Nursing Education from Duke University.



Sue Carson, Director of the Division of Medicinal Marijuana, will retire from the Department of Health in February. Sue has been with the Department since 1999. Before joining the Division of Medicinal Marijuana, she worked in several areas of the agency, including Health Facilities, Healthcare Quality and Oversight, Management and Administration and the Office of Vital Records.

New Jersey Immunization Conference:
Bringing the Power of Immunizations into Focus



Measles Mumps Rubella Smallpox HPV Diphtheria Pneumonia
 Tetanus Typhoid Fever Hepatitis B Polio Chicken Pox HPV Fever Polio
 Hepatitis A Polio Chicken Pox HPV Rotavirus Influenza Meningitis
 Rubella Diphtheria Polio Influenza Tetanus Typhoid Fever Polio
 Hepatitis B Polio Chicken Pox HPV Rotavirus Influenza
 HPV Hepatitis B Polio Chicken Pox HPV Yellow Fever
 Meningitis Polio Chicken Pox HPV Rotavirus Influenza
 Mumps Rubella Diphtheria HPV
 Chicken Pox Hepatitis B Polio
 Typhoid Fever Mumps
 Smallpox Pneumonia Polio Rubella
 Hepatitis A Typhoid Fever Mumps
 Fever Yellow Fever Mumps HPV
 Hepatitis B Measles Polio
 Polio Chicken Pox Yellow
 Fever Polio Rotavirus
 Hepatitis B Chicken Pox
 Rotavirus Rubella HPV

Measles Mumps Rubella HPV Chicken
 Pox Smallpox Polio Influenza Hepatitis A
 Diphtheria Rotavirus Pneumonia HPV
 Tetanus Typhoid Fever Hepatitis B
 Polio Chicken Pox HPV Yellow Fever
 Hepatitis A Polio Chicken Pox HPV
 Typhoid Fever Hepatitis
 B Polio Mumps Chicken
 Pox HPV Rotavirus
 Influenza Meningitis
 Rubella Polio Measles
 Diphtheria Pneumonia
 Typhoid Fever Tetanus
 HPV Hepatitis B Polio
 Chicken Pox Measles
 Mumps Smallpox
 Diphtheria Pneumonia

Thursday, May 28, 2020
 Rutgers University • Busch Campus Center, Piscataway
 Continuing Education for this activity is pending.
 Please see final announcement for details.



Cancer: Where to Call for Help

When a person is diagnosed with cancer, he or she has a lot to learn—and many decisions to make. What’s the best course of treatment? Where is the best place for treatment? Who is the best doctor to treat my cancer? How can I get a second opinion?



Now there’s a single phone number for clear and compassionate answers about cancer treatment.

RWJBarnabas Health, in partnership with Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey, the state’s only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, has created an Oncology Access Center. This concierge-like service for cancer patients has an easy-to-remember number: 844-CANCERNJ. At that number, specialized oncology access representatives and

oncology nurse navigators stand ready to direct patients to the expert care they need. The Oncology Access Center creates one point of contact for all oncologists and hospitals in the RWJBarnabas Health system and at Rutgers Cancer Institute.

“We are well aware that people who are newly diagnosed or seeking a second opinion are dealing with an extremely stressful personal situation,” says Rutgers Cancer Institute Director Steven K. Libutti, MD, FACS, who is also senior vice president of Oncology Services, RWJBarnabas Health. “We want to make the process of finding care as stress-free and efficient as possible.”

In the past, Dr. Libutti explains, patients and caregivers needed to do extensive research on their own to figure out what location and what physician would be most appropriate for their care. “Now they can more easily access NCI-designated cancer care across the state,” he says.

“We’re especially excited to have nurse navigators located right at the contact center if a person has a clinical question,” says Bryan Soltes, system vice president, Network Development, Oncology Services for RWJBarnabas Health. “That aspect of our system makes it uniquely helpful to patients.”

When a caller is referred to a specific hospital, he or she is immediately linked to the nurse navigator platform at the hospital, Soltes says. “Nurse navigators guide patients through their entire journey of diagnosis, treatment and recovery, not only making appointments but connecting the patient with oncology support services,” he explains.



RUTGERS
 Cancer Institute
 of New Jersey
RUTGERS HEALTH